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Unfair, Even in Spying

Very recently, a Soviet spy named Runge defected in West Germany and asked U.S. authorities for political asylum. Subsequent developments indicate Runge's loss was a critical one for the Russians.

The defection received wide publicity, as did a Soviet announcement that a CIA agent had deserted to their side. The American was identified as John Smith, and the Soviets said he was recruited by CIA while working as a State Department code clerk in India.

There were reports that a man by that name had once worked for the State Department, but denials that he had ever been associated with CIA.

As charges and counter-charges were hurled back and forth in the Smith affair, Runge began to talk. He pointed an accurately incriminating finger at agents for the Soviet government who were secreted in important military and diplomatic posts in the West German government. Runge, it developed, had masterminded a whole ring of spies while masquerading as a hard-working merchant. His disclosures revealed many secrets of the Western allies had been compromised.

Now it was Smith's turn again and this week he struck hard through the unlikely source of a Russian literary journal. He charged the CIA had attempted to overthrow Nehru and also to thwart the development of Indian agriculture in order to keep that nation dependent on the U.S. for food supplies.

There was a difference in the spy charges. Runge's accusations were specific; he implicated others who were arrested and one spy who committed suicide. The Smith allegations, on the other hand, were so broad and vague as to be unyielding to proof, purposely so no doubt. But we shouldn't delude ourselves. There are many people in the world who are prepared to believe the worst about America on the flimsiest of evidence. We haven't always been guiltless in our conduct of international affairs, to be sure, but the spectre of this nation using starving children as pawns in the cold-blood pursuit of its policies — and that is the horrible implication of the agricultural sabotage charge — must be a new low even for the deceit which is characteristic of espionage.